

SERMON
Preach'd before the
THE
Archdeacon of Rochester's
SERMON
Preach'd before the
QUEEN,
ON

Good-Friday, April 18. 1712.
Archdeacon of Rochester.

LONDON,
Printed by G. Jones, at Joshua Bowyer's,
at the Rose in Ludgate-street. 1712.

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A
SERMON
Preach'd before the
QUEEN,
AT
St. James's Chapel,
ON
GOOD-FRIDAY,
April 18. 1712.

By *Thomas Sprat*, A.M. Arch-
deacon of Rochester.

Published by Her Majesty's Special Command.

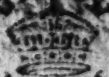
LONDON:
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QUEEN

St. James's Chapel,



MUSEUM

GOOD-FRIDAY

April 18. 1712.

By Thomas Sprat, A.M. Arch-

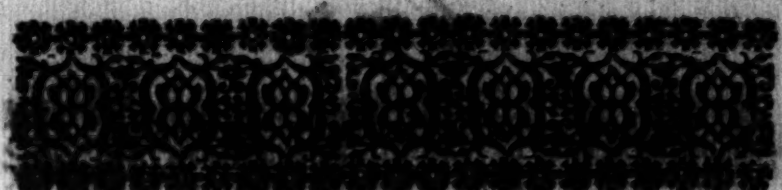
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offended; is fully appeased; and every pen-
itent sinner, from a wretched state of impe-
nity, is made capable of Pardon and Grace
through the Merits and Satisfaction of that
one Mediator between Man and
Great God, our Saviour Jesus CHRIST.

*Even the Mystery which hath
been hid from Ages and Ge-
nerations, but is now made
manifest to the Saints.*

yet it shall be rightly and humbly
considered, and devoutly used by us, it will be
to appear, and invisible in its



*By this Mystery, it is intended
that wonderful Method of
redeeming and saving Man-
kind; of which, according to
the Command of our Church's
Devotions, we are now come
to commemorate the princi-*

*pal Parts, in the Passion, and Death, and Re-
urrection of our Blessed Lord; as a Way of
Redemption, which by the incomprehensible
Councils of God was ordained before the
Foundations of the World; from all Eterni-
ty; and, by His inexhaustible Pity and Com-
passion, was in due time gradually re-
vealed from Heaven to the Sons of Men; where-
by the Divine Wisdom and Veracity, that
aged of Adam, CHRIST only excepted,*

have

without this Sacrament had been implicitly
offended, is fully appeas'd; and every peni-
tent Sinner, from a wretched State of Impe-
nitency, is made capable of Pardon and Grace,
through the Merits and Satisfaction of that
one Mediator between GOD and Man, the
Great GOD, our Saviour JESUS CHRIST,
the only Name under Heaven given among
Men, by which we can be saved.
- A MYSTERY which though it is never
so unsearchable in all the Depths of its Know-
ledge and Degrees, and thus even now, after
its fullest Manifestations, it continues a Myste-
ry still; yet, if it shall be rightly and humbly
considered, and devoutly used by us, it will be
so apparent, so certain, and infallible in its
gracious Effects, that whoever has a true and
firm and faithful Belief in it, he has an undoubt-
ed Title to that eternal Life, which is pur-
chased by it alone. For, while the Wicked-
ness and Corruption of some Men has
served to make the Way to Heaven too broad
and too loose, and the fervent, uncharitable
Zeal of others endeavours to render it too
intricate and too difficult, the right Way it-
self, all the while it is true, is straight and
narrow, but it is also passable and direct,
and through GODS W strengthening us may
become plain and delightful. Tho' it was
once a Mystery hid and conceal'd, yet now to
us it is a Mystery made manifest. And the
Sum of it is briefly this; That since all the
Seed of Adam, CHRIST only excepted,
have

have obtained the Labour of God by Original
 Sin, and without actual Transgressions,
 since the just Recompence of such our Vin-
 culations, is unrepented of: his the first, and second
 Death; since it lies not in our own Power or
 Descent, to free ourselves from the Guilt or Pun-
 ishment of any of the Jewish Law; therefore
 God himself, in the Riches of his Mercy,
 has provided His own Son, to be our Pro-
 pitiatory Sacrifice for all Sin. But then, if
 we will effectually rely on His All-sufficient
 Mediation and Intercession, we must shew it,
 by the evident Fruits of a constant Obedience
 to His Commands, and Conformity to His
 most righteous Will, express'd to us in His
 revealed Word.

In the Words of my Text, the Sacred
 Mystery of this Pure and Primitive Evan-
 gelical Doctrine is represented to us, under a
 double Consideration; of which the first is
 the *Coming*, and the second is the *Suffering*.
 As it stood in the time of its Dark-
 ness, before the actual Coming, and Suffer-
 ing of the Great Messiah. It hath been hid
 from Ages and Generations; but now it is
 made known to the World, by the Birth, and Example, and
 Teaching, and Dying, and Rising again, of
 the same Messiah, by which it is made mani-
 fest to the Saints.

I am to the first of these, I say, this *Mystery*
was hid, and how far, and of what Manner
 and Degree of its Concealment, it will be
 enough, as presently to say with our Apostle,
 That once *it was hid from Ages and Generations*,
 from all the *four hundred* of
 Men in the *World*, Church, which, usually
 computed their Periods of Time by Ages &
 from Generations, from all the *ancient* *Nations*
 of the *Heathen* *World*, *concealing* *it*
 of the *Heathens*, there can be no manner
 of Doubt, *though many* of their *wise* *Men*
 did lay such *divine* *Foundations*, on the *Light*
 of Reason, and delivered such excellent *Pre-*
 cepts of Life, as are of great Advantage, and
 admirable subservient Testimonies to the true
 Religion itself; yet still we must conclude,
 they were *utterly* *unacquainted* with the
 whole *Doctrine of Redemption*. And how
 indeed, were They capable of such a *Discovery*
 very, according to the only Principles on
 which the best of them proceeded? Was it
 not the whole Design of their greatest Men,
 and greatest Philosophers, only to cultivate
 Nature by its own Strength, and by its own
 Sufficiency alone to search for Happiness?
 But this we know is wholly opposite to the
 very first Grounds of Christianity. The Go-
 spel supposes an original Weakness and De-
 fect; nay, more, Pollution and Guilt, in
 humane Nature. That puts us to seek for
 Salvation out of ourselves. That teaches us,
 that the best of our own Works are no way
 meritorious; that even Virtue itself, the
 highest

highest natural Perfection of which our Souls are capable, is no more (in respect of attaining eternal Life by it) than what *Brutus* in his Extremity is said to have called it, an empty and insignificant Name.

Thus for the *Gentiles*, and as for the *Israel* Church, before this fulling Dispensation of our Blessed Saviour, though their everlasting Condition was much safer, their Knowledge of the true Religion more certain than that of the *Heathen*, yet the Manifestation of it was far from being completed then, even to the *Jews*, though that Nation was the first chosen People of God, though to them he sooner and more apparently shewed himself, than to any other of the Sons of *Adam*; nay, to all others, by and through their Light; though their Religion was the same indeed, and in Substance, with the Christian, only differing in Time, and in the Way, and Degrees of its Revelation. As the very Dawning of the Morning is a Part of the same Day, as much as, though not as bright as the Noon; yet still it is true, that the Mystery of *CHRIST* was in great Measure hid from them also.

That had, or might have had sure Ways of discerning our Saviour, instituted by God Himself, the Types of their Law, and the Predictions of their Prophets; in the one of which they might have beheld the Signs and Shadows of that merciful Redeemer, whom in the other they might have perceived di-

fitly foretold, and exactly described. But the Generality of that Church, at first, I demand, pierced through the thick Veils that covered Him, their most knowing and devout Men at best could only spy Him very dimly, and with a glimmering Light, as an Object far removed. And in process of Time, these Scribes and Pharisees, for their own false and sinister Interests, began to keep off the Laity at a wide Distance from their holy Things, whereby they made the Vulgar rest satisfied with the external Pomp, and specious ceremonial Part of their Worship, but careless of its spiritual Substance: thence, by new Traditions of their own inventing, they obliterated the sound and genuine Sense of their Scriptures. What their divinely inspired Authors had spoken plainly of a great Messiah, to appear among them, in an humble, mortal, and suffering State; but for glorious and immortal Ends, they utterly misapplied to gross and sensual Ends: They wrested and perverted all their Prophets, to make them serviceable to their carnal Desires, and boasted Expectations.

INSTEAD of believing that their Saviour as some say to be a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief; to be wounded for their Transgressions, and chastised, and bruised for their Iniquities; that He was to be led as a Lamb to the Slaughter, and as a Sheep that is dumb, so not to open His Mouth: They, upon Occasion of the Miseries they had undergone

to equal pointment or (as I said) and live it
 in the Captivity, and by reason of the fre-
 quent Incursions and Slaves they had re-
 ceived from foreign Nations, universally took
 a presumptuous Fancy, that their Saviour was
 to be a mighty Temporal Prince and Conque-
 rer. Their low and oppressed Condition in this
 World inclining them only to wish for that
 kind of Redemption, and chiefly, if not only
 in this World. To which groundless Imagi-
 nation of Empire, and Sovereignty, and Vi-
 ctories, and Triumphs, to accompany their
 Messias, they have ever since most obstinately
 adhered. To this, by the most righteous
 Judgment of God, their Posterity to this ve-
 ry Day have continued really to flatter and
 delude themselves. As on this Day, their An-
 cestors desperately mocked our dying Saviour,
 with the vain Title (vain as they thought it) of
 King of the Jews.

Such then, so small was the Light of this
 Mystery, such the Degrees of concealing and
 depraving it in the corrupt Ages of the Jewish
 Church.

But in the second principal Part of my
 Text, the perfect Revelation of it is display-
 ed, and presented in us according to those
 Words, *but it was made manifest to the
 Saints*. By which means the
 Saints, who were the first to see
 it large on all the Parts and Circumstances of
 this Manifestation. Indeed, they are all to
 be fully discovered in the whole Course of the
 Sacred Writings of the New Testament, that

it will be sufficient only to mention some of the principal. In this bright Appearance of our Saviour, and nearer Approach of Salvation to Us, by His Manifestation in the Flesh, and the blessed Consequences of it to His mortal Death and glorious Resurrection, though all things belonging to it were venerable and astonishing, and fit to be of God, and not of Man, yet my Text confines our Meditations especially to two Particulars of it.

First, The Time when the Mystery was opened, which is now made manifest to the Saints.

Secondly, The Persons to whom it was first, and is still chiefly declared, is made manifest to the Saints.

In the Time of this Mystery's full Declaration, among many others, these following Observations may seem to be most remarkable.

First, It was long after the Settlement and Flourishing of all the other ancient Religions, when there was scarce any Part of Mankind that was not already fixed to some peculiar Deity, and devoted to some peculiar worship of its own. By which means the visible Power, and uncontrollable Authority of the Gospel, was evidently shewn, in that it came not forth as the rest did, as gradual Corruptions of the true primitive Religion.

archal Religion, but when every Quarter of the World was already calmly settled in its own Religion, and the greatest Part of it blindly addicted to some particular Idolatry: And so the true Religion was, in its very Beginning and Cradle, to contend against so many rooted Strengths and established Advantages, which the false Superstitions had every where obtained, by their long Prescription, and the Antiquity of their Possession.

Secondly, The clear Doctrine of this divine Mystery was manifested in that Age, when the greatest Degree of humane Learning and civil Arts prevailed, that ever Mankind before enjoyed; whereas all the other imperfect or false Religions began in a Darkness of Ignorance, worthy themselves. The Gentile Superstitions were before the Original of their Learning, their Gods before any of their Philosophers, though most of them the Creatures of their Poets. The Jewish Worship began in the Wilderness, when the Generality of that Nation, Male and Female excepted, cannot be supposed to have excelled in Secular Knowledge, being but lately freed from cruel Slavery, travelling and wandering about the World, being more careful to sustain their Lives, than to advance their Understandings. The Dreams of Mahomet took their Rise in that very Season, when the old Learning was vanishing, and before the new was risen, when the thickest Mists of Ignorance

rance and Superstition overwhelmed the World: of which we need no other Proof than the gross unmanly Absurdities of *Magic* *Superstition* itself.

But now the Christian Faith sprung up in the Age of *Augustus*, when all civil Nations were quietly united under one Empire, and when an universal Peace did cherish all Arts. And 'twas still makes the Observation far more considerable though the World was then overspread with a general Light of worldly and profane Knowledge, yet that Knowledge was chiefly possessed by the *Idol* *Worshippers* themselves: The first Founders of our Religion having the least Share of it, neither their Professions, nor Studies, nor Callings, nor Labours, nor Inclinations, giving them any eminent Advantages that way: So that Christianity was not so much aimed and defended, as tried, and sifted, and examined, and contended against by the Learning and Civility, which then flourished: When there were Orators and Philosophers enough to dispute against it; when there were Men of Wit and Reason enough to prevent any the least Artifice, or new Decree, that could be imposed on the Minds and Consciences of Men. But this Religion was no Artifice, and needed none to introduce it; this was of *God*, and therefore it must stand.

But *Thirdly*, That which is principally to be noted in the *Time* of its Manifestation, is this: that it happened when the *Jewish* *Nation*,
tion,

tion, in which it arose, was in the lowest
 Condition, and when the Heathen Roman
 Empire, which strove to extinguish it, was
 in the highest Degree of Temporal Strength,
 Splendor, and Glory. And, if we take a so-
 ber, impartial View of the State of Things at
 that Time, what a prodigious Event was it!
 that out of *Judea*, a Nation despised by all
 its Neighbours, narrow and inconsiderable in
 its Territories, groaning under the Yoke of
 foreign Tyranny, there should arise, and pre-
 vail, not to say any new Customs, or polite
 Manners of civil Life (for those would cer-
 tainly have been contemned and vilified, as
 coming from the *Heathen*, who were esteemed
 a sordid Generation of Men) nor yet a new
 Sect or Opinion in Philosophy (for that
 would, probably, have been rejected by the
 subtil *Greeks*, and high-minded *Romans*) but
 that out of that obscure Country
 there should arise a new Religion, a Manner
 of the greatest and most universal Importance
 of all the Thoughts of Men; that it should
 arise not to be confined only to *Judea* (for
 that might have been supposed, as well as
 the Law of *Moses*) that it should arise not to
 hold any Manner of Correspondence with
 any other Religion (for then, perhaps, the
 Gentile Idolatries might have peaceably ad-
 mitted it, as they did one another; then,
 perhaps, it might have been allowed and so-
 lerated by the *Romans*, who scarce ever re-
 fused the Freedom of Rome to any other
 Wor-

Worship) but that from so mean, and (as its Enemies thought) despicable Beginnings, it should arise with a declared Intention of extirpating all the Altars, and Groves, and Temples, and high Places of all the false Gods, and of converting the whole habitable World to itself, directly against the Power, and Policy, and Malice, of those that held the best Part of the World in Subjection. And that it should bring this Intention to Effect, not by Victories, not by any Accession of Power, by Conquests over foreign Nations, or the Death of its Enemies, but by the Suffering of its blessed Author Himself, and the Death of most of those, who at that Time had the Courage to bear Witness to the Truth.

THE last Particular I proposed to handle in my Text, was to speak of the Persons to whom this Revelation was, and is now made; *It is made manifest to the Saints.*

THIS glorious and most aimable Name of Saint, has been so frequently, so much abused, that it is become, in usual Acceptation, a Word of doubtful Interpretation. It hath been too commonly affected by the ambitious Pretenders to new Light, or the making Saints usurped by a Faction in the Church, under the Name of the whole Catholick Church, but by both Extremes too often denied to any who differ from them, though they practise never so conscientiously a sober Religion, in quiet Sincerity, with Peace and
Unity.

Unity. But this is directly contrary and destructive to the true Catholick and Apostolick Faith: for in the Articles of our Creed we are not taught to believe in the high Illuminations, great Gifts, or large Knowledge of the true Saints, much less in the counterfeit Miracles of pretended Saints, but only in the Communion of Saints.

What is it then to be a true Saint? To whom doth this high Dignity justly belong?

It is First, To have an humble, serene, and practical Knowledge of Spiritual Things, and to have warm, unchangeable, but peaceable Affections towards them: To have the Light without the impure Smoak; to have the same Light without the furious Flame; a Light equally free from the gross Fumes of carnal Lusts, and from the violent Combustions of Schism and Heresy. To be a Saint, is to study and understand, and remember the Word of God, not for the Ostentation of the Phrase, or only for the unspeakable Advantages of its Promises and Rewards, but for the silent Efficacy of its Precepts. It is to endeavour that the Truth of Christianity be clear, and quick, and bright in our Understandings (if the Abilities that God has given us will allow it) but however, to be sure that it be vigorous and powerful on our Wills, and Appetites, and Passions.

Secondly, To be a true Saint, is to be always watchful over all our own Thoughts, Words, and Actions; but never to condemn the Thoughts of others, seldom their Words

or Actions; never, but when we have a just Authority to reprove and correct, which is still to be exercised with the greatest Christian Tenderness and Prudence; and for no other End, but the Amendment of those we reprove, and Example to others. To be a Saint, is to go from Grace to Grace towards Perfection; but still to join one Grace to another as we go; not to leave and despise some Graces upon the Presence of greater; not to forsake Humility, or vilify Charity, in a Shew of Zeal for the Cause and Glory of God.

Thirdly, To be a true Saint, is to endeavour to be justify'd before God by Faith, before Men by Works: To have Consciences void of Offence, not only towards God, but also towards Men: To have Men the Witnesses of our good Consciences, and God the Judge and Approver of them also. It is to be holy, as God is holy, not in the Degree of his Perfection, but in the Imitation of His Example. To be holy, as God is holy; to enjoy ourselves the Blessed Purity of our Holiness, as he does of His; and, as He does too, to manifest the Goodness and Usefulness of it to others. It is, in all religious Duties, to suffer the Mixture of no other Thoughts, but such as are purely religious: In the common Affairs of Humane Life, to do nothing that is utterly inconsistent with Religion; though we be not always just employed about some religious Act: Give me leave to say it, to make all our humane Offices as divine as we can,

to

to make all our divine Duties as humane as possible.

IN a word, to be a true Saint, is to have the Zeal of Religion more in our Heads than in our Tongues, far more in our Hearts than in our Heads; and yet, to have it so much in our Heads, as may serve to establish us in our most holy Faith, against all manner of Contradiction; so much in our Tongues, as may conduce to the Praise of God's Grace, for the Conviction of Gainfayers, and for the Honour of a Christian Profession.

THAT it is to be a true Saint. To Men thus qualified, this Mystery was, and is only efficaciously manifested. But yet, to the Saints of different Times, in different Measures, and in a vast Distinction of Degrees, and Proportions. To the Apostles and Primitive Saints, by an extraordinary Call, to those of this, and the later Ages, by an ordinary Call. To them, by a near and familiar Conversation with our Lord Himself, living and dying, in His Miracles, in His Agony, at His Passion, and after His Resurrection. To us (if we be Saints) at a distance, and by His and their written Instruction and Example. To them, with more Persecution and Renown; To us, with sufficient Certainty and equal Benefit. To the first Saints, by Signs and Wonders; To all others since, by necessary Consequences and right Conclusions, upon those Signs and Wonders. To them, by Reason confounded and

amazedly To us, by Reason purified and exalted. To them, by Nature altered, without them, above them, below them, and round about them; To us, by Nature altered, within us. To them, by changing the steady Course of the Creation in their Presence, by a miraculous curing the Diseases, by opening the Eyes of the Blind, by raising the Dead, by dying Himself, and rising again. To us, by the like Works within our own Hearts, by taking off the Scales from our Minds, by healing our spiritual Diseases, by raising us from the Death of Sin to the Life of Righteousness: Nay, farther yet, by a new Creation in our Souls, where the Matter is at first really as much without Form, and void, the Chaos as rude and indigested, as that of the great World was; but as soon as the Blessed Spirit is pleas'd to blow on our Hearts, strain the same comely Order, and beautiful Harmony, and calm Light, and cheerful Fruitfulness, will begin to appear in our little World, as it did in the great World, by the powerful Operation of the same Spirit. In short, To the Primitive Saints this Mystery was manifested, by a swift and mighty pouring forth of that Blessed Spirit, as it was a rushing Wind; To us by a gentle Influence, descending as it was in the Shape of a Dove: To them by such supernatural Abilities, as best fitted the first Founders of a Religion; such as Tongues, and Miracles, and the infallible Tokens of Divine Authority: To us, by Gifts of a lower Degree, but as effectual

to

to Salvation; such as Hearing, and Obedience, and Self-denial, and Meekness, and Patience, and Humility; and such other Graces, as best become the Part we are to perform, which is to be the Scholars, and Followers, and Imitators of those Blessed Masters, as they were of CHRIST.

Thus, at sundry times, and in divers manners, has the true GOD vouchsafed; partly to hide, partly to reveal, and then entirely to manifest the true Worship of Himself to Mankind. At first but softly whispering some Share of it to the old World, by a Law written in their Hearts; written again with His own Finger in the two Tables; then speaking something louder and more distinctly to the Fathers by the Prophets; then most splendidly demonstrating, most articulately proclaiming it, in these last Days to us by His Son, by whom He made the Worlds; who, tho' in His Humility He humbled Himself to Death, even the Death of the Cross; yet in His Divinity, is the Brightness of His Father's Glory, and the express Image of His Person. The divine Grace and Goodness thus fill by Intervals, and Degrees, raising up the Minds of Men from a gross, natural, from a ritual, figurative, and merely moral Religion, till it brought us to the perfect Manifestation, to that holy and undenied Mystery of Religion, which is truly as natural, and more moral; but far more spiritual and substantial, than any of the other. A Mystery which is not only the Sum of the good Things past, the Per-

Perfection of the Heathen Philosophy, the End of all the Jewish Types, the Accomplishment of all their Prophets, but it is to us the only Root of all the good Things to come. Its Faith is the Substance of Things hoped for, the Evidence of Things not seen. Its Truths and Precepts stedfastly believed, and faithfully obeyed, and persevered in, are the only sure Ground, and solid Foundation of that new Life and happy Immortality, which is brought to Light by the Gospel, which was once hid from Ages and Generations, but is now made manifest to the Saints; to the Primitive Saints, to the True Saints of all succeeding Ages; to every one of us, from the highest to the lowest, if we be real Saints, but not otherwise. The Secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, but only with them that fear Him: If this Mystery be hid, it is hid to them who are lost, and unregenerate; if it be manifest, it's manifest only to those who are sanctified: A powerful Argument to excite and persuade us all incessantly to labour for a contrite Heart, pure Desires, mortified Affections, and a holy and immaculate Conversation, which alone is to be Saints, not so much in Name, not only in Shew, not at all in Hypocrisy, but Saints indeed and in Reality, according to the blessed Pattern on this Day set before us by our Crucified Saviour.

To whom with God the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, &c.

FINIS.

